



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

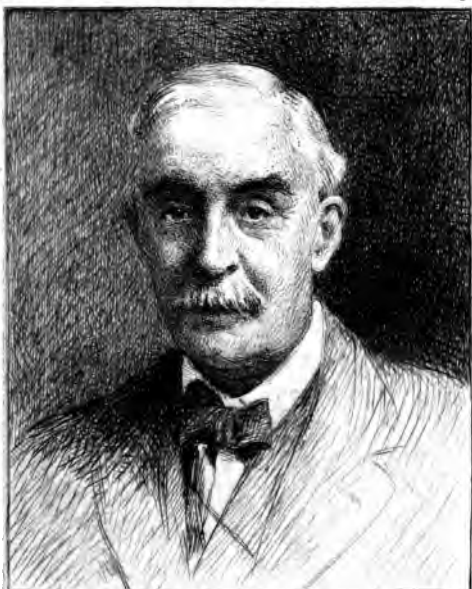
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

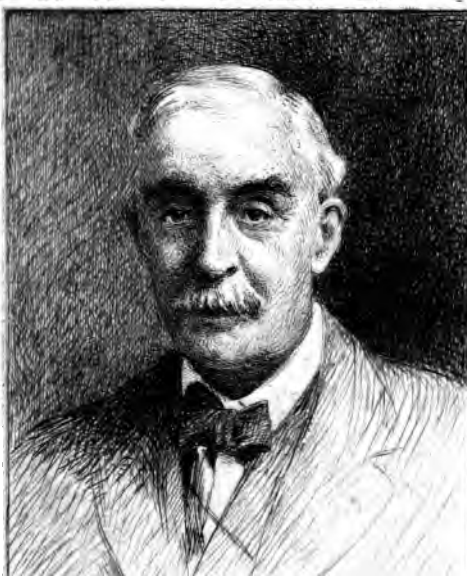
.R93



FROM THE LIBRARY OF
ROBERT MARK WENLEY
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY
1896 — 1929
GIFT OF HIS CHILDREN
TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

BV
461
.R9

Ph. W. W. W.



FROM THE LIBRARY OF
ROBERT MARK WENLEY
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY
1896 — 1929
GIFT OF HIS CHILDREN
TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

2 v
461
.R9

Paul Wicks

**A STUDY OF
CONSCIENCE**

The Baldwin Lectures, 1885

A STUDY OF CONSCIENCE

BY

THE RT. REV. NELSON SOMERVILLE RULISON, D. D.
Late Bishop of Central Pennsylvania.



PHILADELPHIA
GEORGE W. JACOBS & Co.
103-105 S. Fifteenth St.

**COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY
GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO.**



EXTRACT FROM THE DEED OF TRUST IN ACCORD-
ANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF WHICH THE
BALDWIN LECTURES WERE INSTITUTED.

"THIS INSTRUMENT, made and executed between Samuel Smith Harris, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Michigan, of the city of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, as party of the first part, and Henry P. Baldwin, Alonzo B. Palmer, Henry A. Hayden, Sidney D. Miller, and Henry P. Baldwin, 2d, of the State of Michigan, Trustees under the trust created by this instrument, as parties of the second part, witnesseth as follows:—

"In the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five, the said party of the first part, moved by the importance of bringing all practicable Christian influences to bear upon the great body of students annually assembled at the University of Michigan, undertook to promote and set in operation a plan of Christian work at said University, and collected contributions for that purpose, of which plan the following outline is here given, that is to say:—

"1. To erect a building or hall near the University, in which there should be cheerful parlors, a well-equipped reading-room, and a lecture-room where the lectures hereinafter mentioned might be given;

"2. To endow a lectureship similar to the Bampton Lectureship in England, for the establishment and defence of Christian truth: the lectures on such foundation to be delivered annually at Ann Arbor by a learned clergyman or other communicant of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to be chosen as hereinafter provided: such lectures to be not less than six nor more than eight in number, and to be published in book form before the income of the fund shall be paid to the lecturer;

"3. To endow two other lectureships, one on Biblical Literature and Learning, and the other on Christian Evidences: the object of such lectureships to be to provide for all the students who may be willing to avail themselves of them a complete course of instruction in sacred learning, and in the philosophy of right thinking and right living, without which no education can justly be considered complete;

"4. To organize a society, to be composed of the students in all classes and departments of the University who may be members of or attached to the Protestant Episcopal Church, of which society the Bishop of the Diocese, the Rector, Wardens, and Vestrymen of St. Andrew's Parish, and

PREFACE.

THESE lectures were delivered by Bishop Rulison in the spring of 1895. At the time of his death, he was preparing them for publication. He had intended rewriting parts of the lectures, but was unable to do so, and they are now published in their original form. The concluding paragraphs of the last lecture were perhaps never written out, as they were not to be found among the Bishop's manuscripts, and in order to complete the argument, a conclusion has been added which it is hoped is in keeping with the thought and spirit of Bishop Rulison's work.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.—The Origin of the Moral Sense.....	13
LECTURE II.—The Reality and Power of Conscience.	35
LECTURE III.—Theories of the Nature and Functions of Conscience	51
LECTURE IV.—The Doctrine of Development and the True Sphere of Conscience	73
LECTURE V.—Moral Responsibility and the Author- ity of Conscience	91
LECTURE VI.—The Authority of the Church in its Relation to Conscience and Indi- vidual Judgment	111

LECTURE I.
THE ORIGIN OF THE MORAL SENSE.

LECTURE I.

THE study of Origins may be fairly called the characteristic and absorbing study of philosophic minds during the Nineteenth Century. The plan of this study has been to observe "how things are going on" in the hope of ascertaining how they began. The plan is admirable and the prosecution of it entirely praiseworthy. But it has been the misfortune and mistake of some eminent students to confound cause and result, the sign and that which it signifies, and too hastily and illogically to conclude that because we see how things are going on now we know they must always have gone on in substantially the same way. So it has come to pass that some among us declare the eternity of matter only; deny the existence of spirit; affirm that there is no God or if there is He is unknowable, (which comes to the same thing); assert that man is only an automaton moving without volition at the pressure of some secret spring, and regard the universe with all its circling worlds as a kind of *mécanique celeste*, or a fortuitous concourse of atoms of soot, pipe clay

and lime flashed out of some ancient fire-mist or Aurora Borealis, and shaken together for a million years or so, and thus organized by the process of natural selection into kingdoms which we call animal, vegetable and mineral, that grow by chance, and move without purpose and go on after the fashion of the fancied world of Epicurus, which some power was supposed to have wound up and set spinning like a top, and then left to spin on forever.

Over such a world as that, there could be no moral Governor, and in it there could be no men having a sense of right and wrong and what we call a conscience, for where human thoughts and actions are determined by fate, necessity or chance, there can be no moral motive and choice of the will, and when these are absent there can be no conception of right or wrong. Such a world, if there could be one, would be morally dead. Fortunately the number of men who believe in either the possibility or the reality of its existence is very small and is growing smaller every day.

But the number of thoughtful men who believe that the life of the world we live in has been developed out of a few original germs created by

the Supreme Being by the process of natural evolution working according to the laws of natural selection in every way, is very large and is daily growing larger. The leader of this great company was during half a century Mr. Charles Darwin, and their philosopher is now Mr. Herbert Spencer. Both these men have sought to solve the problem of ethics by the application of the laws of physics. In his great book on the "Descent of Man," Mr. Darwin suggests an explanation of the moral sense as the natural development of the social instincts of the human race in its lowest state. He says: "The more enduring social instincts conquer the less persistent instincts. After having yielded to some temptation, we feel a sense of dissatisfaction analogous to that felt from other unsatisfied instincts called in this case 'conscience,' for we cannot prevent past images and impressions continually passing through our minds; and these in their weakened state, we compare with the ever present social instincts, or with habits gained in early youth and strengthened during our whole lives, perhaps inherited, so that they are at last rendered almost as strong as instincts." "The imperious word 'ought' seems merely to imply the consciousness of the exist-

ence of a persistent instinct, either innate or partly acquired, serving him as a guide, though liable to be disobeyed."* Thus conscience is but little more than memory and the moral sense is not much higher than the instinct of the bird or dog. Mr. Spencer has placed Mr. Darwin's thoughts in philosophical language and has sought to account for all the moral intuitions, aspirations, hopes and fears, and the conscience of the human race by the application of the same law and principles of natural evolution by which Mr. Darwin accounts for the development of the animal kingdom.

But the philosopher of the school of evolution is neither so broadminded nor so logical as its founder and great teacher, for while Mr. Darwin not only allows but also demands a few germs created by God, before he can account for the development of animals, Mr. Spencer requires nothing for his supposed development of moral qualities but experience, inheritance and natural selection, and with conspicuous unreason supposes that bodily inheritance and experiences of pain and pleasure somehow (no one knows how), become transmuted into a sense of right and wrong,

*"Descent of Man," I., 100.

and so degrades conscience, duty, and all the high moral sentiments of mankind to no diviner origin than the dust of the ground.

The gospel of the Synthetic Philosophy is at the heart and core of it "the gospel of dirt," for it is of the earth earthy. Its idea of our own sense of right and wrong, of obligation, duty, and all moral sentiments which we commonly associate with conscience, is that they are not innate or divinely created or involved in human nature, but are rather derived and developed from human experience in social relations. There is, therefore, according to that philosophy, no absolute right or wrong among men who are (as everywhere men are), imperfectly constituted. There may be a greatest right and a least wrong but the quality and degree of each depend upon the man's nearness to a perfectly harmonious environment. "Ideal conduct, such as ethical theory is concerned with," Mr. Spencer says, "is not possible for the ideal man in the midst of men otherwise constituted."*

If all this be true, then it follows logically that neither Church nor State has the right to expect or demand right conduct from any man, and the

*Data of Ethics, p. 280.

only justification for any kind of penalty is that which is supposed to be afforded by necessity or fate, and which may be formulated in the words of an address by Mr. Tyndall some years ago, when he said to the robber: "You offend because you cannot help offending and we punish you because we cannot help punishing."*

Such a theory of right and wrong, that has no divine sanction and no deeper and stronger basis than that of experience is a menace to modern society and to all that men hold dear the wide world over. And although there is much in Mr. Spencer's philosophy that is sound and wholesome, yet his theory of moral quality, development and obligation, is so defective and dangerous that it is no wonder that some of his disciples have gone farther than the teacher dared to go, and have carried his logic to its necessary and irresistible conclusion, that might is always right, and robbery is no wrong, provided the robber can succeed in keeping the property that has been stolen.

That this is no wild and extravagant assertion, is witnessed by the following passage taken from a clever

book of one who is known to

*

n *Times*, Oct. 1, 1890.

be a scholar of the evolutionist school. In Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe's book on "Individualism," he discusses the philosophy of civil law and rights and among other revolutionary doctrines, declares: "The all-sufficient warrant for any effective governing power in the social group doing whatever it thinks best, is the welfare of the group. Right is transfigured might. 'Let him take who hath the power; let him keep who can.' That is property, is it not? Suppose the many, it will be asked, finding themselves poor, take it into their heads to expropriate the few, what then? Well, why not? If it can be shown that robbery of the rich can be effected, and effected with advantage to the poor, I cannot see for the life of me, why it should not be done. It is contrary to morality? But, unfortunately, hifaluting abstractions 'butter no parsnips.' Besides, I deny it. Morality is co-extensive with self interest. If anybody disputes that, he is wrong. It is rude and dogmatic of me to say so, but it is a short answer, and I am not going to discuss the first principles of ethics here. I repeat emphatically, if the poor and the many can see their way to dispossessing the rich and the few, and to

reap advantage from the process, then they have a right and a duty to do it.”*

Such language as this is startling indeed to all men who have old-fashioned ideas of morality, justice, honesty and truth, and would lead most of us to regard its author as a fit subject for either a penitentiary or an insane asylum. But it is no more than the logical conclusion of a system of philosophy that gives to the idea of duty only an “illusive independence”;† that declares “the sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory and will diminish as fast as moralization increases,”‡ that “the absolutely right in conduct can be that only which produces pure pleasure—pleasure unalloyed with pain anywhere—and conduct which has any concomitant of pain or any painful consequence, is partially wrong,”§ and that “acts are good or bad according as their aggregate effects increase men’s happiness or increase their misery.”||

Think for a moment of what this doctrine really

Pages 257 and 263.

Data of Ethics, p. 125.

ibid, p. 127.

ibid, p. 261.

10.

means. It not only cuts away the true foundation of morality, but it also dissipates the poetry and charm of human life, degrades its best conceptions of heroism and manly virtue, and insults the sublimely sacrificing Son of God, who through pain and mortal agony revealed the eternal character of God and gave life and immortality to men.

"No act producing any pain can be absolutely right." Will such a statement stand before the judgment bar of thoughtful men as either sound morals or sound philosophy? Test the statement and see.

Only a few years ago a million men went out from their homes to save our country from a threatening danger and for the benefit of all future generations. Each soldier knew perfectly well that he was taking his life in his hands, and yet in the face of fire and blood, he felt that America and his own conscience expected him to do his duty, and thousands died in awful pain to make life worth living for their fellows in their native land. Will you write on the soldiers' monuments—"these men died of recklessness or suicide, and their acts are not to be praised or honored because they were done in pain?"

Will you say that the captain of that German ship that sank a few weeks ago with its precious freight, in the water of the cold North Sea, was a fool, because he went down with his ill-fated vessel and did not try to save his own life before the lives of the ship's passengers?

Will you call the engineer an idiot, who in the presence of certain danger and the possibility of escaping it by jumping from his cab, deliberately sets his face, stays in his engine, stands by the lever, sticks to his sense of duty, slows the tremendous train and saves a hundred lives at the cost of making himself a painful cripple for all his days on earth? And will you dare assert that his conduct was not absolutely right because by it he suffered pain?

Here is a noble girl who amid the loneliness and hardships of a great city has been vainly but cheerfully giving her young life to save that of her mother, and now in her dying hour expresses to a sympathetic friend her feeling that her life has been a failure and that she will have nothing to show her Master in the last day. And that simple, wise companion gently answers, "I think I would show Him my hands, if I were you, I am sure He will know." Will you laugh at that

gentle speech and chide the dying girl because she has voluntarily suffered pain and given her life for her mother?

On a green hill far away, between two crosses, hangs the divinest man the world has ever known. He is giving His life for the world. He is dying that men may live forever. Will you stand in thought with those mistaken men and add your voice to their sarcastic cry, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save"? Will you say Christ's conduct was not right because He suffered pain?

How can any one save another without, in one sense, losing himself? How can we ever become heroes and saints and noble men without sacrifice? And how can we ever hope to be saved here or anywhere, intellectually or spiritually, unless we suffer discipline?

The philosophy that so contradicts the common sense as well as the moral sense of mankind does not deserve the name of wisdom and is the enemy of all the world holds dear.

Such teaching as this, if it should be widely disseminated and generally received, would deteriorate human character, poison our home life, destroy business, brutalize social relations and degrade the race to a condition of savagery and

animalism. Life would not be worth living in an utterly selfish and wretched world, without God and without conscience, with neither love nor hope, where the strong only could survive and the weak must perish, and where to all alike the most welcome call would be the old Alexandrine invitation to supper and suicide.

The philosopher of this earthly school of ethics may smile at this picture and declare there is no chamber of horrors either in or at the end of his system of thought. He may even argue that the moral faculty, however it originated, has now become a part of the organic structure of human nature and is not therefore likely to be displaced. He may point to himself and his disciples as equal in respect of truth, honesty, purity, justice, to men who hold a different view of the origin and immutability of the moral sense, and may then present the long history of human development from confessedly low and rude conditions to its present condition of strength and beauty.

But all this is beside the mark. The question is not of the intentions of teachers who think the sense of right and wrong has been created by heredity and experience and natural selection. Nobody doubts their good intentions. The real

questions are, Have they clear eyes? Do they see straight? Have they followed their own logic? Are they not better than their creed? With many men about many things, it is true to-day as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that seeing they do not perceive. And it has been the ill fortune of a great many reformers to have a thoroughly good conscience with a wretchedly wrong judgment.

The men who are trying to put in place of the old system of morality with its alleged divinely created sense of right and wrong or what we call the human conscience, something that is confessedly not divine, but rather purely human, developed out of and by man himself, are doubtless devoted to a search for truth. Probably it would be unreasonable to suppose that any large number of persons who have been educated in our homes and schools and churches in the old ideas of a divinely given sense of right and wrong will immediately, upon their being told that conscience is only experience or the influence of heredity, become corrupt and criminal. But give them time to think over the difference between the old and new ideas, let a generation or two pass and then look at their children who have been

taught that conscience is nothing more than an organic remembrance of their ancestors' experience, that duty is only prudence with always an eye to the main chance, that remorse is only the vague memory of some ancestor's misfortune, that love is only altruism which "must in several ways be more limited as the highest state is approached,"* that honesty and justice are a kind of compromise, and that right is only transfigured might—I say, wait until all this is thoroughly believed and has become organized in human character as its exact opposite now is, and you will find that you have waited for nothing better than the reign of anarchy and the destruction of society.

No thoughtful mind can fail to see that the problem of human life and progress is becoming, under the influence of increasing numbers and growing aspiration, rivalry and competition, at once more complex and more difficult of solution. All around the world, men feel that in the chambers of their blood there moves the impulse of a new life. Everywhere it is struggling with prevailing conditions for larger possessions, keener pleasures, and wider

*Data of Ethics, p. 251.

liberty. It is doubtless a necessary condition of the evolution and progress of society, and ought to be recognized and welcomed by all the lovers of their kind. But if the awakened life is not rightly taught and directed, it is as full of fear and danger as it is of hope and safety. Whether the mighty explosives which modern chemistry has produced shall be used to tunnel our mountains and mine our coal, or wreck our industries, and kill our fellows, depends upon the motive and education of the men who use them. Even under the influence of the moral ideas of the world's greatest teachers and in an atmosphere that is saturated with the principle of religion, multitudes of suffering men claim to find no rational sanction for existing conditions or the hope of better things. How much less of hope and reason will there be among men if you tell them that religion is a fraud and conscience a humbug, and the sense of right and wrong is but nonsense at the best!

When any large number of men talk as does Mr. Belfort Bax, in his "Religion of Socialism," then society is near its dissolution. "If I can evade the law and exclude your vigilance, I have a perfect right to do so and my success in

doing so will be the reward of my ingenuity. If I fail I am only an unfortunate man. The talk of dishonesty or dishonor, where no moral obligation or duty can possibly exist, is absurd. You choose to make certain laws to regulate the commercial game. I decline to pledge myself to be bound by them, and in so doing, I am clearly within my moral right. We each try to get out of the other all we can, you in your way, I in mine. Only, I repeat, you are backed by the law, I am not, that is all the difference."

Heaven help us if it is. And if it is, this world would be a better world if it were like the moon, without life and atmosphere, cold and dead. But the real difference is as wide as the heavens and the earth. It is the difference between civilized men and savages, between right and might, between conscience and impulse, between God and the devil.

There was never a time when that difference so much needed recognition and accentuation as the present. The philosophy which is teaching the multitude that might is right is the philosophy of a savage world. The teaching that is trying to destroy the idea that conscience speaks with divine authority is the doctrine of devils. And

the lesson that both moral and physical destruction follows close on the track of a denial of eternal right is the lesson of long ages and the broad world.

You have only to turn your gaze toward the land of Homer's heroes and read the short but splendid tragedy of her history, from the time when because of her intellectuality she stood strong and pure, to the hour when she sickened and died of the leprosy of sin, to see that intellect without holiness, beauty without purity, eloquence without conscience, knowledge without love, and education without character are but blossoms whose root and life are in the corruption of the grave.

The Roman story has the same lesson. You have only to look at the land of the Cæsars and the Ciceros, of mighty men of law and war, to see how a race with iron blood and massive brain, a race that conquered the world and is still teaching it by the classics of its golden age, could die by a moral suicide when its conscience became seared and virtue was but a name.

You have only to read French history to see how a nation of brilliant men, when their conscience becomes blunted and their sense of right

and wrong becomes blinded, run into sensuality and die of corruption. And you need only examine some epochs of our own history, to see that when a nation or any part of it grows skeptical of the power of truth and honesty, when character is less valued than money, and when the sense of brotherhood has lost hold of the national conscience, the nation will enter into tribulation and distress.

To make a people stand high and strong and live a life of righteousness, you must have a moral character that is based on a belief in God, in the conscience created by Him, and in a sense of right and wrong that will hold men faithful to their moral standard, as the stars keep their courses and the tides obey the moon. When there is any doubt on this point, there will be a skepticism of heart and life, which, given time enough, will, like a moral dry rot, wither every sweet and tender aspiration of human nature and eat out the pith and marrow of all true manliness.

It is because of the tremendous dangers that threaten every human interest if men lose their belief in a divinely given sense of right and wrong and drive conscience from the throne room of their nature; because there are so many vague

and defective notions held among men concerning the origin and authority of conscience; and because, whatever we may think of it, conscience is always with us here and will be hereafter, either accusing or applauding our motives and deeds, that I have made it the subject of these Baldwin Lectures. The majesty, solemnity, and tremendous practical importance of the subject is so great that I stand before it with that reverent fear which the traveler feels when he stands with uncovered head in that wonderful valley of our Western World before El Capitan. But whether "conscience shall make cowards of us all" in that other and lower sense of fear, will depend upon our practical judgment and life. Let us remember the thought of one whose fame was broader than the land he lived in:

"There is no evil that we cannot either face or flee from, but the consciousness of duty disregarded. A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent like the Deity. If we take to ourselves the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, duty performed or duty violated, is still with us, for our happiness or our misery. If we say that darkness shall cover us, in the darkness as in the light, our obli-

gations are yet with us. We cannot escape their power nor fly from their presence. They are with us in this life, will be with us at its close; and in that scene of inconceivable solemnity which lies farther onward, we shall still find ourselves surrounded by the consciousness of duty, to pain us wherever it has been violated and to console us so far as God has given us grace to perform it.”*

*Webster's Works, Vol. VI., p. 105.

LECTURE II.

THE REALITY AND POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

LECTURE II.

As it is often easier for a traveler to see the danger that lies before him in his path than to find a way to escape from it, so it is easier for a teacher of morals to point out a defective and dangerous moral standard than to surmount all the difficulties that surround even the best one known to men.

Whatever may be our own personal convictions, it is simply true to say, that in the greatest symposium that is gathered to-day about the wells of knowledge in the field of mental and moral science, there is hardly any question more hotly disputed than that of the origin, constitution and functions of conscience. One of our own greatest metaphysicians, recently gone to his reward,* declared not long before his decease, that "the burning philosophic question of the day relates to the development of conscience."

To the superficial observer this does not seem to be true. He looks out upon the world of business and he sees at first no signs of such a ques-

*Dr. McCosh.

tion. Men seem to be tremendously in earnest about something, but their earnestness and activity appear to be engaged in the effort to get on in this world and not to get up into any higher realm. In the business world the chief question and the one that underlies all others and makes them all wait until it is answered, is doubtless the question of how to get bread. From it spring social, industrial and political difficulties that perplex the wisest statesmanship and with which education and philanthropy grapple, sometimes in vain. How to get bread for all and enough for all, and how to preserve all in the possession of it, is as some one has said, the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilization and which not to answer is to be destroyed. Men must have bread or they die. And in their effort to get it, they seem to be chiefly interested in planting and reaping, in mining and manufacturing, in mowing machines and sewing machines, in ships and railroads, steam engines and electric light, and other means and facilities for making what we call money to feed the many tongued hunger of men. But when the observer looks closer and longer, he will see that by all this stress and strain, energy and activity, rivalry and

competition, the world workers are being forced into classes that are bound together not by common blood and brotherhood, but by the ties of trade and self interest, and that under the name of unions they are practically fighting each other and making war on the unity of society and the race. And so sooner or later the business world is forced to front the question of what is my duty to my neighbor, which is evermore, at the heart and core of it, a question of conscience.

And when our observer turns away from the world and opens his half blind eyes in the dim religious light of the Church he sees, at first sight, no sign of his question there. The Church, he thinks (we are often told so), is interested chiefly in dogmatic enigmas, theological puzzles, fossilized notions, and is busy with forms and ceremonies, lights and vestments, and wherever there is unusual life and emotion, in getting what men call souls, saved or guaranteed to be saved in some far-off celestial country for which, according to M. Renan's taunt, they neglect the terrestrial land they live in. But when the cataract is removed from this observer's eyes and he sees things as they are, he finds that in spite of the many faults and shortcomings of the Church, it

has after all given the world nearly all its large Universities and greatest Charities, and that it knows what it has always taught, that Godliness is profitable for this world as well as for the life that is to come. And then he sees that far more than all other organizations of men, the Church is trying to solve the social question, by the application of the principles of the Gospel of Christ which is intended not only to save men but also man, and to save him here and now and alive.

And when this observer turns to the world of science and learning he finds his first impression as misleading as before. In this realm the study of material phenomena seems, indeed, all absorbing. And undoubtedly it is true that there are many students who enter the presence chamber of the King and turn their backs upon the throne. They are men, great, it may be, in their specialties, but because they have dulled by disuse the noblest faculties of their nature, they are simply incapable of seeing things that are invisible to physical sight. These look coldly out through their eyes of flesh, and ignoring the intuitions, wishes, and aspirations of the human heart, see nothing that has not material form, and foolishly fancy that force must exist in a visible shape.

And then because God cannot be found in cosmic vapor, nor seen through telescope or microscope, nor resolved by spectrum analysis, and is not a phenomenon to be observed and definitely explained by an "experimentum crucis," they boldly declare that He cannot exist, or what is practically the same thing, that we cannot know Him.

And yet every step in this line of study leads irresistibly to the certain conclusion that behind all phenomena and above all physical force, there is a Personal Cause who is and must be invisible and vastly greater than any result that is evolved out of His life and will, and that men who have, as all men do have, some sense of right and wrong, are responsible to Him.

"Two things," said the philosopher Kant, "fill me with awe; the starry heavens and the sense of the moral responsibility of man," and our Webster said in reply to the question, "What is the greatest thought that ever engaged your attention?"—"The greatest thought that ever filled my mind was that of my personal responsibility to a personal God."

If men say, Ah, but there is the crux; is there any God? I answer Yes; and His exist-

ence is as clearly proven as the existence of any force known to men.

No one doubts that there is a force in nature. We say it is a fact that needs no proof. We feel it and deal with it every day. So do we also know there is mind in nature, and at least we need no proof that it is in human nature. The one must be accounted for as well as the other, and in the last analysis will be accounted for exactly as the other is. If force has somewhere its great first cause, so has mind; and if the cause must correspond to its result in the one case, so it must in the other. The presence of thought in the universe, whether in what we call adaptation in nature or in the mind of man, implies a thinker, and that implies a Personal Being as the cause, for none other is competent to produce such a result. To ascribe the energies of nature, the thought, feeling and volition of man to a Supreme and Personal Being, is a perfect generalization, and is supported by the nature of the phenomena before our eyes and the common sense of the world.

If one says, I look out upon the world, and although I see force surging in the seas, and gleaming in the stars, and flashing in the sunshine, and

shimmering in the mist, and glowing in the lightning, and working out the world's great work through countless ages and transformations, yet I see no personality, and therefore I do not know there is a personal God, I answer, Look again with open eyes, not now at the great cosmos that seems to you so dumb and purposeless, but at this micro-cosmos, that we call human nature. No man doubts his own personality. Every man knows that he is a personal being, and needs no proof of what is so self-evident. But if that be so, then whoever, call Him God, or whatever, call it force, made you and me with our undoubted personality, must have at least as much personality as we have.

And then you have proved the existence of God and by the scientific method, which declares that an effect can never be greater than its cause and that nothing can ever be evolved out of a cause that was not first involved in it. And this conclusion is not in the least invalidated by the dictum of a philosopher that the Infinite cannot be a person. We are not talking about the Infinite in an abstract sense. We are saying that God who is infinite in power and goodness is and must be a person because His children possess

personality, and there is no contradiction either in the conception or the statement that the Great First Cause can have no limitations except the law of His own Being. Nothing is plainer to common sense than the truth that if personality came out of that Being personality must be in it. God, therefore, has at least as much personality as man has, and that is enough, not only for our argument, but also for His provision for the world.

But in finding God through man we have found more than we looked for. The man is clothed with a tissue of faculties which invest him with a kind of divinity. He has intuitions, aspirations, wishes, wants, hopes, longings that are as real as rocks or cosmic force. He has a feeling of personal responsibility, duty, obligation. He has a set of graduated faculties, on the throne, or behind the throne of which rules imperially a something that we call conscience. It has always been so. The consentient voice of all history testifies to the reality and universality of this constantly present King and Judge of man's motives and deeds. And the sense of oughtness, this sublime feeling that over us, like the vault of heaven, spreads the moral law, compels our

thought with resistless force toward Him who made the heavens and is the light and life of the world.

Conscience itself speaks to men of God. The world that moves on the outmost circle of our planetary system was discovered by the wavering of the one next to it. That perturbation was inexplicable except on the theory that some unknown world was attracting it across millions of miles of darkling space. So these movings of our spirits, this feeling of responsibility, this sense of duty, sin and shame cannot be understood unless we believe in the Divine life swaying the little lives of mortal men.

The proof of the reality and power of conscience is plain. It is in every history, every literature, every age and every man.

You may stand in thought in the old Greek Pantheon, and looking at the ancient mythologies, you will see behind them a background, vague and nebulous, it may be, but still showing the light of right and the shadow of wrong, and some idea of moral obligation which is the underlying principle of conscience.

When you begin to call personal witnesses, grand old Homer will testify of a certain awe of

the Supreme Deity and a longing for a better justice than earth affords. Æschylus will tell you the fabled Furies were but the personifications of the terrors of conscience, and that Prometheus Bound bears his sorrows patiently because of a good conscience in all that he has done. Lucretius will say "the scourge, the executioner, the dungeon, the pitchy tunic, even though these be absent, yet the guilty mind anticipating terror applies the goad and scorches with its blows." Satiric Juvenal will call, "Why shouldst thou think that they have escaped whom the inward consciousness of guilt agitates with amazement and scourges with the soundless lash." Plato will lecture you in ideas of supreme good; Socrates will talk to you about unity of virtue and a conscious immortality. Aristotle will reason about prudence and a divinely given sense of right and wrong. Seneca will affirm the divine origin of conscience, and Cicero will declare in magnificent language, that the Divine law which obliges it is eternal, immutable and binding on all nations and all ages. The Fathers of the early Church, the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, the reformers of the sixteenth century, the theologians, philosophers and poets of all times and

schools of thought will add their testimony to the universality of conscience and even the modern evolutionist will declare his belief in it and give an ingenious theory of its genesis.

The testimony of the Bible I have left to the last, because I have wished to show that the existence of a conscience is plainly proved by the evidence of human nature. But the testimony of the Holy Scriptures to its reality is on every page. And yet the word is seldom used in the Bible—not once in the Old Testament, although as Dornier remarks, “the entire economy of salvation in the Old Testament is founded on the conscience.” In the New Testament the word is found a few times, but in both Testaments the idea is on almost every page.*

St. Paul implies that all men have a conscience; that they always have had one, and that the heathen or those who have no other law will be judged by it. “If a man know his doing to be in harmony with the law, his conscience is *αἰσθη, καλη, καθαρη* *απροδοχος*” The two parts of conscience are specified. “If his doing be evil, so also is his conscience, inasmuch as it is con-

* I. Peter iii., 16; Heb. xiii., 18; I. Tim. iii., 9; Acts xxiv., 16; Heb. x., 22; Tit. i., 15; I. Tim. iv., 2.

sciousness of such evil so (πονερα) μεμιασμενη far as the evil deeds shadow themselves in it like blots; or χεαυτηριασμενη so far as it bears them in itself ineradicably and indelibly like brands."* A moral verdict of approbation or disapprobation is implied in the words, "Their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts accusing or excusing one another,"† while the expression, "When ye wound their weak conscience"‡ seems to indicate that it may be sick and feeble, needing the help of the physician and educator.

The illustrations of the authority and punishment of conscience are very numerous and striking in the Bible. The sounding footstep follows the sinner among the garden trees and the awful voice cries out, "Where art thou?" He has slain some mortal body, or worse, some immortal soul, and conscience calls, "Where is Abel thy brother?" He has indulged some secret sneer or unuttered blasphemy, and it sternly says, "Nay but thou didst laugh." He has stolen from some neighbor secretly and the command to confess is heard.

*Delitzsch, Bib. Psychology, Bk. 3, p. 165.

†Rom. ii., 15.

‡I. Cor. viii., 12.

"Tell me now what thou hast done." He has committed some mortal sin and conscience cries, "Thou art the man." He has got another's field by fraud and murder, and when on his way to possess it, an incarnate conscience confronts him and forces him to cry, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy." He has been profane and blasphemous, and while his knees knock together and his cheeks grow pale, it writes in flames before his eyes, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." He has delivered the Holy One into the power of men to be crucified, and while he washes his hands in water conscience stains his soul with blood and convicts him of his cowardice and sin.

But I need not multiply evidences of the existence of conscience in man. They are everywhere and they speak with no uncertain voice. However materialistic, or optimistic we may be, or wish to be, there is pervading the world a deep undertone of feeling that somehow men are responsible to a Higher Power and Person, and that He is judging the world every day through its conscience, and that He will judge it in His own Person by and by. The classical writers are full of this thought. The nations are full of it. The definitions of conscience and the myth-

ology of the Nemesis may vary, but the core of the conception remains ever the same. And so now and hereafter the man who refuses the right, denies the good, and destroys his conscience has and will have to confess, "Alas! Myself am Hell"; while the man who obeys his conscience and does his best to live in and up to the light that has been given him is making heaven and living in it every day.

LECTURE III.

**THEORIES OF THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS
OF CONSCIENCE.**

LECTURE III.

FROM what has been said in previous lectures we may surely say that conscience is a great world fact. But in face of the universal testimony to the reality of its place and power in human nature, we are forced to confess that the opinions of great thinkers and writers concerning the genesis, nature, authority and obligations of conscience are variable and many of them contradictory.

Just because this is so, the fairminded man who has sufficient learning, courage and patience to examine a truth on all its sides and in all its relations, will not hastily construct a theory of conscience out of his own head, without at least a glance at the voluminous literature of the subject. If we have not become fixed in the opinion that this kind of study is but a vain attempt to solve the mysteries of what a witty French philosopher calls the second part of metaphysics, viz., "that which men of common sense will never know," we shall find the survey interesting and profitable.

Beginning with the Bible, which is the Word

of God, it is simply true to say that it formulates no theory or philosophy of conscience. It would not be fair, however, to infer from this fact that there is no true philosophy of conscience, either in the word or the mind of God, or that men may not find and formulate one.

The Bible is not singular in respect of its silence concerning a theory of this great subject. It is equally silent in respect of the philosophy of the inspiration of men who wrote it; the philosophy of the Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, Ascension, and the Sacraments of Jesus Christ. The statements of the Bible are concerned chiefly with facts rather than the philosophy of them. The *rationale* may be and generally is important, but it is never so important as the facts themselves. For them the evidence is so strong and sure that there is left no room for denial or doubt. But no man can be absolutely certain that he has the full philosophy of them, because no human mind can fathom the depth of the Eternal One. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite, and in the problem of Divine reasons there is always some quantity unknown to men.

In this domain of philosophy, this "border

land" of the known and settled faith, "thinking minds will appreciate and reverently and conscientiously use the freedom which is accorded to them, but they will not carry their liberty over into the realm of adjudicated truth."*

The reality and universality of a conscience in man may be regarded as a closed question; the philosophy of it is an open question.

What is true of the Bible in respect of its silence on the subject of the origin and authority of conscience is also true of all the old classical and philosophical writings on the subject. They all testify to the reality of this great faculty and power, but no one writer attempts to account for its origin or to define its essential nature, authority or obligations. There are plenty of indications in the oldest books known to us, as in the Book of Job and in the books of ancient peoples outside of Israel, that thoughtful men were struggling to solve great moral problems, even as they are in this nineteenth century. But no one had then constructed a system of moral science, and men were blindly feeling after truth rather than following with clear eyes its clue and forcing it to appear by positive logical processes.

*Pastoral Letter, House of Bishops, 1895.

We should naturally expect to find in the voluminous writings of the early Fathers of the Christian Church some definite statements on this subject, for much of their preaching was extremely practical and searching, and appealed strongly to the conscience. But we look to them in vain for definitions or explanations of this power with which they were continually dealing. Some writers have intimated that the great Augustine was "timid of appealing to the conscience lest by so doing he should appear to admit any sufficiency in human nature for the supply of its own defects."* Other Fathers showed no such fear and yet made no analysis and offered no explanation of the phenomena of conscience to which they so frequently appealed. The nearest approach to a definition is the declaration of Tertullian, "Obscured it may be because it is not God, extinguished it cannot be because it is from God." Beyond this there is little that can be fairly called an explanation of the phenomena of conscience.

When we reach the time of the Schoolmen, we find them principally engaged in formulating a system of casuistry, which we now

*Bampton Lecture, 1869.

call a "department of ethics dealing with cases of conscience." They invented the distinction between mortal and venial sin, and their whole philosophy of right and wrong, which has become famous or infamous under the name of casuistry, had its origin in that distinction. And yet it is remarkable that these men who were distinguished for nothing so much as for their technical logical ability and their tendency toward a microscopic examination of subjects that engaged their attention; men who could split hairs on the shadow of a shade in matters of casuistry; who could furnish almost innumerable trumpery reasons for either the doing or not doing of things of almost infinitesimal importance; who found their chief pleasure in some of the most sickening processes of moral dissection and who made it their boast that each of them could make his own reasoning soul a corpse (*perinde ac Cadaver*, that is Loyola's phrase), without feeling or will, utterly dead and without motion except as moved from without by the will of his superior,—I say it is amazing that men like these, constantly engaged with questions of conscience, should not have treated the subject with some approach to the scientific method and with some-

thing like the skill and accuracy that are commonly the accompaniment and result of the use of that method. But they never rose to such a lofty task. The best they did, with all their logical ability, was to resolve conscience into and to distinguish between the "synteresis or the internal law and the syneidesis or the internal accuser, and to dispute minutely whether conscience was an act, a habit, or a power.*

There was not much change in the treatment of the subject by theologians and metaphysicians until after the Reformation, which was itself the answer of a clear and quickened conscience when the judgment of the Church had rejected the false doctrines of the universal jurisdiction and supremacy of an Italian Bishop. The Renaissance of learning had made it possible for churchmen to use for the determination of doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions, the historical method, which in this domain is the only scientific method. The use of this method proved beyond the possibility of a doubt that the pretensions of the Italian Church to supreme authority and universal jurisdiction were as baseless as the shadow of a dream, there being nothing in the acts of

*Bampton Lecture, 1869.

any of the six General Councils of the Church that could by any possibility be construed in favor of such extravagant assumptions. The voice of history being one and consentient against such claims, the judgment of men in the Church, rightly educated and classified, accepted the doctrines and polity of the ancient and undivided Church and rejected that which was distinctly Roman and therefore uncatholic. And then conscience, true to itself and its eternal nature and office, commanded that men should be true to the rule which their judgment had accepted.

The Reformation was thus the direct result of the working of the human conscience, and both in England and on the Continent the Reformers constantly asserted the supremacy of conscience over merely ecclesiastical authority, while at the same time they asserted the supremacy of the Bible over every man's conscience. Whatever may be thought of an apparent inconsistency in these two principles, the result of their application was large, conspicuous and far-reaching, and led among other things to a reconsideration of the nature and authority of the faculty that had shown itself capable of producing such results. Scholars like Hall, Taylor and Sanderson treated

the subject in a large and philosophical way, and endeavored to establish the authority of conscience as the whole foundation of moral right. The treatise of Bishop Sanderson is in most respects the ablest work on the subject ever written. And yet it is true that his literary style, both in the original Latin and in the recent English translation, is not sufficiently clear to enable the average reader to be certain of his meaning, and that he utterly fails to answer some modern objections to his idea of the authority of conscience. He calls it a faculty or habit of the intellect whereby the mind, by a rational process, applies its innate light to the discrimination of moral actions. "*Conscientia est facultas sive habitus intellectus practice quo mens hominis per discursam rationis applicat lumen quod sibi adest ad particulares suos actus morales.*"

After him a school of skeptics arose in which Hobbes and Locke were conspicuous, and these tried to sweep away all distinctions of right and wrong, the one referring them wholly "to external laws," the other declaring them to be simply "modifications of bodily good and evil." These loose ideas were reproduced and enlarged in the

writings of Mandeville, the chief of the sensual school, whose pet expression was that "private vices are public benefits." Under this influence morals came to so bad a condition, that even such pronounced free thinkers as Lord Shaftesbury, Hume and Hartley strongly denied the conclusions of the sensual and civil schools. Then More, Hutchinson and Bishop Butler contended for the truth that conscience is a faculty given by God to the original constitution of man.

Bishop Butler's definition is probably more widely known than any other, although to many among us it seems utterly inadequate to solve the difficulties that surround the subject. He says it is a "principle of reflection by which we distinguish between and approve or disapprove our own actions." Reid calls it the "ethical side of the general sense of truth, the *communis sensus* which remained in man after the Fall." Hutchinson regards it as a tendency of the mind to discern the beauty of virtue or the deformity of vice. Adam Smith bases it upon the relation of the heart to its object. Brown calls it an emotion awakened by action. Cumberland finds right only in the utility of human action. After these another class of writers

came to the front including Bentham, Tucker and Paley, the last-named of whom utters the amazing words: "On the whole it seems to me either that there exist no such instincts as compose what is called the moral sense, or that they are not now to be distinguished from prejudices and habits." Jeremy Bentham was the real founder of the Utilitarian School, whose one test of the rectitude of an action was its utility, leaving the question of utility to be determined by the reason. Then came Mackintosh, Stewart, Chalmers and Whewell whose idea was that conscience is not one but many faculties. "By the culture of the directing and controlling faculties we form habits, according to which we turn our attention upon ourselves and approve or disapprove what we there discern. These faculties thus cultivated are the conscience." Alexander Bain, Herbert Spencer, and John Fiske tell us that conscience is developed by means of natural selection and is therefore a variable quantity. Pascal declares that "conscience is one thing North of the Pyrenees and another South." Mansel and Hamilton doubt its right to rule the other faculties of human nature. Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill are agnostics on the subject, at least, as to

the personality of the Eternal Power that always stands behind conscience and without whom conscience could have no real authority, while Martineau, Jevons and Calderwood give to the conscience a divine voice and authority. In our land Seabury, Porter, McCosh and Hodge teach the doctrine of the supremacy and the obligations of conscience—supreme in its own sphere and yet obligated to be rightly informed.

In Germany Leibnitz and Malebranche make conscience "an innate love and approbation of what is right." Delitzsch calls it the "law within his heart;" Mosheim, an act of the understanding; Reinhard, a tendency to follow the leading of God; Harless, "an inner revelation;" Baader and Schubert, privy of the soul with the omnipresent, omniscient God; Hoffman, "the self-evidencing of God in man;" Schenkel, the source of all religious knowledge; Rothe, an infallible subjective instinct; Fichte, Hoffman and finally Immanuel Kant, the greatest German and philosopher of them all, teach, in Kant's own words, that this "wondrous power works neither by insinuation, flattery or threat, but merely by holding up the naked law in the soul, it extorts for itself reverence if not always obedience, before

whom all appetites are dumb however secretly they rebel." It has its origin in God.

This historical sketch could easily be made longer, but it is believed that reference has been made in it to most of the leaders of philosophical thought on this subject. It has been long enough to show, among other things, the great variety of opinions that have been held by able men, and the difficulty of forming a definition of conscience that shall be at once clear in itself and satisfactory in its solution of the difficulties that confessedly surround the subject.

And yet a definition is desirable and necessary for clearness of thought and correctness of conclusion. I have before remarked that the most famous definitions of conscience are those of Bishops Butler and Sanderson. The latter calls it a "faculty or habit of the practical understanding which enables the mind of man by the use of reason and argument to apply the light which it has to particular moral actions." I humbly think this definition is obscure, and needs an interpreter to tell us, first, what is the practical understanding as distinguished from any other kind; secondly, what is the nature of the light of the mind referred to; and thirdly, what consti-

tutes a moral action. Several things are here assumed and not proved, and the faculty called conscience is confounded with a very different one, which we call judgment.

Bishop Butler's well-known definition is not much more satisfactory: "A principle of reflection by which we distinguish between and approve or disapprove our own actions." Here again explanations are needed of the "faculty of reflection," and even when they are given, conscience will seem to most men, under this definition, the same thing as judgment. But if it be the same thing as judgment, then it must be like the judgment, fallible, erring, weak, sometimes self-contradictory, and always needing education and development. If that be the real condition of conscience then it has no real authority and the instincts and the universal sense of the human race have been imaginary or misleading.

We are compelled, therefore, to seek some definition that shall at once satisfy this universal instinct and reconcile conflicting theories concerning the authority of conscience. Believing, as I do, in the tripartite nature of man, my own definition of this marvellous power is as follows:

Conscience is a divinely implanted principle or

faculty of man's spiritual nature, giving to him the apprehension of everlasting rightness; enabling him to perceive the difference between a good intention and a bad one; compelling him to discern the beauty of a right choice and the ugliness of a bad one; kindling the consciousness of his obligation to keep the law which his will, acting through his judgment, has voluntarily chosen; approving his loyalty or condemning his disloyalty to that law and the dictates of his most enlightened judgment, and filling him with the sense of his personal responsibility for the use of all his powers to know and do the everlasting right.

Conscience does not choose. It simply testifies to the rightness or wrongness of the choice. The choice is made by the will, and the will is affected by the judgment. But conscience is not judgment.

Nor yet does conscience determine what is strictly true or false. If you say it does, then you make both parts of a contradiction true, and truth is anything that a man fancies it to be. For conscience has been keen and strong and active and true to itself in multitudes of men who have held different opinions upon a given sub-



ject, and have died for their convictions because they believed them true and felt themselves bound to die for conscience sake.

Conscience does not determine what is absolutely right or wrong. If you say it does, as so many persons do, then the same old difficulty confronts you. For conscience has over and over again testified to the rightness of an action in one environment and the wrongness of the same action in another environment. And it has done this not only with reference to matters indifferent in themselves, such as the eating of herbs and meats, to which St. Paul makes allusion, but also with respect of human conduct, the rightness of which has been declared to be the same in all circumstances by the revealed will of God.

It is because of this apparent variation in the testimony of conscience as seen in history, and because of the confusion in his own thought of conscience and judgment, that Mr. Herbert Spencer says in words that have been quoted in fancied triumph by the fool who says in his heart there is no God, and therefore neither right or wrong—"If the moral sense to which you appeal possesses no inherent veracity, gives no uniform response, says one thing in Europe and

another in Asia, originates different notions of duty in different ages or races or individuals, how can it afford a safe foundation for an immutable morality?" These high-sounding words show that conscience is to Mr. Spencer what he fancies God is to all of us, simply unknowable. At least they show in this philosopher's mind the same confusion of thought that is seen in the great majority of people in respect of this subject. Conscience is confounded with judgment. But it ought not to be so confounded, for it is impossible that conscience shall contradict itself and change with changing circumstances and still have any authority for any living man. If there be a Divine light shining in the mind of man it may not be supposed to be snuffed out by every changing wind. And undoubtedly there is such a light. Hear the description of it by an ancient heathen in words as eloquent as were ever written by uninspired men:

"This law is right reason, agreeable to nature, diffused among all men, constant, eternal; which serves to call us to our duty by its commands and to deter us from vice by its prohibitions and which, although it moves not the wicked either by its commands or prohibitions, yet fails not of

its end when it commands or forbids the good. In this law no change can be made; it can be neither partially repelled nor wholly annulled. Neither Senate nor people can release us from its obligations. It is its own expounder, its own interpreter. It will not be one thing at Rome, and another at Athens, one thing to-day, and another to-morrow, but eternal, immutable and binding all nations and all ages, it will be one law; and one will be its author, arbiter and giver, God the Lord and Sovereign of all. Whoever obeys not Him flies from himself; and having scornfully rejected his own humanity, suffers from this very fact the greatest punishment, even though he escape those other sufferings which are believed to exist" (in a future state).*

This splendid passage from Cicero for which we are indebted to Lactantius, is in reality a powerful description of the law of conscience. But it is one of our misfortunes that while we recognize the majesty of the general law, and while we know that it must be uniform and universal in its application, not one thing at Washington and another at Westminster, not only for

*Cicero, in Lactantius *De Vero Cultu*. Lib. VI.; Sec. 8.

Christians but also for heathen, it is extremely difficult when we come to apply it to practical life, to deduce from it principles of actions which are not embarrassed by doubts and exceptions. For example: Parents are to be honored and yet their commands are to be despised if they clash with God's commandments. The life of our neighbor is to be preserved and yet there are circumstances which justify us in depriving him of it. We are bound to keep our promise, but not if the fulfillment of it requires us to place a revolver in the hands of a maniac. The more numerous and complicated the relations and circumstances of life, the more difficult it is to apply the light of nature to our conduct, and the easier it is for ignorance and rashness to plunge the man into danger and destruction.

But if you refuse to confound conscience with judgment, educating the latter and always obeying the former, you may not always know the whole truth nor follow the absolute right, because of your necessary ignorance; but you will keep the glory of your manhood unstained, and its integrity unbroken, because you will ever do that which, according to the light within you,

seems the best to be done, than which there is no better possible to any one. To make you do that is the one and only work of conscience.

LECTURE IV.

**THE DOCTRINE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE
TRUE SPHERE OF CONSCIENCE.**

LECTURE IV.

DOES the true genesis of conscience imply that it is the result of development, education and training, and if it does, wherein and to what extent has it authority over men? These are the burning philosophical questions of the day.

The answer often given to the first question is that conscience is developed and may be educated. And if one says, "Then it has a variable voice and sometimes speaks with stammering tongue and not as one having authority," the answer comes back very much as follows:

The growth of conscience is very like the growth of the reason or intelligence. In the case of the intelligence the fact of development does not lead us to distrust our power of discovering truth. The intelligence is a cognitive power and perceives things and the relations of things without and within us. It grows with our growth and is ever revealing more truth. The man knows more than the child, the civilized man more than the savage, the philosopher more than the peasant. And this fact does not lead any man to dis-

trust his understanding, does not lead him, for example, to doubt mathematical truth or the ordinary observations of experience.* Just as little should the growth of the moral power lead us to doubt its authority. The two are on precisely the same footing.

But here is where the fallacy of such reasoning appears. The two things are not precisely alike. They are not on the same footing at all. They are as unlike as the perpetual motion of the wheels of a clock and the hands that mark and the bell that strikes the hour. The clock can move on without the hands and bell. Their office is simply to tell the hour. So conscience is an everlasting perception of right and wrong, and the impulse to choose the one and reject the other, while judgment is the hand that points out what is right in any given case or the tongue that names the wrong. The judgment is developed and changes much as the hands change their places on the face of the clock. But the central shaft that moves the whole machinery changes not. It moves ever in the same way; points in the same direction and neither hastens nor slackens its speed.

*Dr. McCosh—Magazine Article.

Precisely so, conscience never varies in its testimony. However ignorant or cultured the judgment, however clear or perplexing the environment, however changeful the voice of reason in the court of evidences, there is absolutely no change in conscience. Its voice is one. It testifies to the same thing all the time. It approves men for living in obedience to the law which their judgment has accepted and it disapproves all disloyalty to that law. But conscience does not make the law, does not even choose it. The choice is made by the will and judgment which are always affected by the opinions and culture of the times and what we call in a general way, education. Conscience is not affected by this education, has no need of its culture. It speaks almost automatically. It never fails to speak when there is need. It never contradicts itself. It approves men when they are loyal to the right as they know it, and condemns them when they violate the law which they have chosen and believe is right. That is all that conscience has ever done or ever will do. It is not difficult to trace the working of the conscience when we examine the processes in our own nature and the natures of those about us, and when we do that

we shall see that there is no actual and no conceivable working of conscience that does not come within the limitations of this definition. If it be said that, as the organs of the body, an eye or a hand, for example, lose somewhat of their power by simple disuse, so conscience grows strong or weak according to the action of the will in obeying or refusing to obey its voice; the answer, I think, is that the change in conscience is apparent and not real. The man's judgment is changed by his attitude toward conscience, whether of obedience or of disobedience, and this attitude modifies his sensibilities, making him more sensitive to its voice at some times than at others. But the voice itself is not hushed. The ear has become deaf and does not hear it.

Doctor Shoup, in his interesting book on Mechanism and Personality, has compared conscience to inertia. "Inertia is purely reactionary, does not exert energy, but resists simply. In like way conscience does not manifest itself unless there is conscious deviation or purpose of deviation from the moral path upon which the self is moving, but immediately upon the advent of a purpose of deviation it sets up its resistance. And when inertia has made all the resistance competent to

it, it becomes quiescent. So with Conscience, when the will has acted and Conscience has been overridden, the protest ceases and is not felt so long as there is no glancing back, but whenever purpose becomes tremulous, the reactionary emotion of conscience begins to act, and the will is asked to return."

Then again in the light of that analogy you may see how conscience, which like inertia is blind, and knows nothing but action, sometimes resists a change from worse to better. Take, for example, the case of a young man brought up in comparative seclusion and taught from childhood to regard all games such as cards, chess, billiards, and the like, as having inherent in them somewhat of sin. After a time he goes into some larger town and into a different society where most thoughtful persons recognize the truth that there is no inherent wrong in these things, but only in their abuse, and his judgment about them gradually changes. But I suppose when he first began to think the matter over and to live according to his new light, he felt certain qualms of conscience. So long as a thing remains a speculative opinion, conscience does not act. It is only when the will acts or purposes to

act that conscience speaks. But this process of the will and judgment is gradual and so the current of what we call the moral nature is gradually turned. When it is, conscience is silent.

This accounts for the fact that some men, persisting in evil, do not seem to be troubled by their conscience, while others are always in a flutter. In the first case there is no thought of returning to the right way, and in the second the self is moving in a constrained path and the will is ever on the point of giving up to recognized obligation. In the cases which are worse than these, where conscience ceases to sting, the plain explanation is that the will of the man has given itself up to evil, according to the truth of Dante's awful image of the "serpent and the man each melted into other," and there is but one will between them. These are they who call evil good, and whose light has become darkness, and whose conscience and whole manhood is dead.

If that be true, then there is not only no need for a doctrine of development, but there is great danger hidden in such a doctrine, for it dethrones conscience from its supremacy of the human faculties and leaves man, as Mr. Spencer sarcasti-

cally says it does, with a fitful guide that "possesses no inherent veracity, gives no uniform response, says one thing in Europe and another in Asia," and leads him by no surer hand than that of chance. The objection to this theory of the development does not lie against the possibility of development but only against the alleged fact and the certain result of it.

Granting, for argument's sake, that the germ of the sense of oughtness was implanted in human nature by God, it is easy to see how it might be handed down through generations of the race by an evolution, through heredity and that combination of forces which we call natural selection. There is no objection to so much of the doctrine of evolution. Probably it is handed down from parent to child and from one generation to another in just this way. And if one goes farther and accepts the whole Darwinian theory of the descent of man (which certainly is not yet proved no matter how many evidences point in that direction), he need not lose sight or hold of conscience as something given by God, and having authority in human nature. For as that which is evolved from a cause must have been first involved in it, so there must have been with-

in the few germs that Mr. Darwin acknowledges were created by the Supreme Deity, the essence and life of that conscience which we now see living in and having authority over human nature to-day. If it has all been under a process controlled by God, the law of Conscience is as much His law as the law of nature or of revelation. There is no difficulty in harmonizing the real nature and office of conscience with that theory of development, but just as soon as you make that faculty itself subject to every "wind of doctrine," give it the power of a giant or the weakness of a dwarf, the voice of an angel or the snarl of a devil, the love of the truth, or the love of a lie, the choice of good or the choice of evil, according to its environment and education, you not only drive it off the throne and out of the throne-room of human nature, but you also degrade that nature and make it as liable to run into the vagaries of socialism and the madness of anarchism as to walk in the light of God's natural and revealed truth.

But whether the original divinely implanted germ of conscience in man has been transmitted by the law of heredity or not, it seems certain that its normal character and meaning must be

distinguished from the purely intellectual quality and activity of the soul, and that it cannot without self-stultification speak contradictions to men. And it never does. That it seems to do so, at times, is simply because of the confusion in the popular thought, of conscience and judgment. But these are totally different the one from the other. The reason or judgment accepts a certain rule as the law for its action. Conscience affirms the necessity of obeying that rule. It does not define what is absolutely right. It is the business of the reason or judgment to ascertain what is right by the best use of all its powers and the light which has been given to it. When that has been done, conscience says, "Now do what seems to you to be right," and immediately the man feels the mighty impulse throbbing through his nature to find and do that which seems to him the everlasting right.

There is no other view that can explain the variable verdict of sincere men, and the different notions of duty in different ages and races. Human judgments vary according to the varying light and culture of men. Conscience shines ever like a star and suffers no eclipse. It approves men when they live loyal to the right as

they know it, and it condemns them when they disobey the law which they believe is right. The will acting through the judgment makes a decision; the conscience bids men be true to that decision. This, I say again, is all that it has ever done or ever will do.

It gave its approval to Abraham who prepared to sacrifice his own son because he believed the voice and character of God, and said within himself, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" It gave its sanction to Socrates, who for love and loyalty to truth, as he conceived it, dared to die. It gave its impulse and approval to St. Paul, who, ignorant of the whole and highest truth, yet loyal to the truth as he understood it, went in the way of persecution, "haling men and women to prison," and giving his voice against them when they were put to death; all the while doing his terrible work as he himself declares, "in all good conscience" before God.

The women who throw their children into the Ganges; the people who lie down to be crushed by the Juggernaut; the parents who strangle their own daughters as soon as they are born; the African who kills his aged father and mother rather than see them hunger and sicken

and suffer; the men who in "habitations determined beforehand by God" worshipped idols and yet were called by an inspired Apostle "very religious;" the men of the Inquisition and the Star Chamber; the prelates who in lighting the fires of Smithfield unwillingly lighted a flame that filled the spacious times of great Elizabeth and has illuminated modern civilization; the iron-headed Calvin who burned Servetus; a certain Lord Chief Justice of England who condemned two poor women to the fire believing them bewitched; the stern Puritans of our own land who lived on the somber side of all religious truths and were altogether unwilling to grant to others that religious freedom for which they left their homes and even dared to die; the English ritualist who went cheerfully to prison rather than obey a law enacted by a secular court which he alone believed to be without competent jurisdiction of the matter at issue; the Brooklyn preacher who withdrew from a body of Christian people because he believed he could not stay among them and feel free to preach his own opinions; the Ohio clergyman who claimed the liberty of proclaiming within and under the protection of the church doctrines which everybody else knew

the church abhorred; the modern Irish Home Ruler who, because he fancies the bit of land he lives upon is, or at least ought to be, his own farm, thinks himself justified in resisting all attempts to drive him from it; the wily Jesuit who has no hesitation in deceiving the enemies of the Church because he regards the end as justifying the means; the insane fanatic who tries to kill an officer of the State or make his child pass through the fire to some modern Moloch, because his disordered brain seems to hear a voice divine—these, and many others like them, would all claim to have been driven to their courses by the dictates of conscience. That most of their conduct has been foolish and some of it criminal is evident to most of us, and it is quite certain that multitudes of men who have cried the wretched cant, “for the glory of God and conscience sake,” have been either fanatics or fools.

But conscience has not played the fool to these men. It has spoken with one voice all the time. It has commanded men everywhere to obey the law or rule which their judgment has accepted, and it has rebuked men everywhere when they have refused to obey the law which they have accepted. This view of the subject may seem

novel to some who hear it. But I think it will be found after careful examination that it is the only one that can explain the variable verdicts of sincere men and the different notions of duty in different ages, races and individuals.

Our conception of duty, our acceptance of a rule for our conduct is the result of our education. You can educate children to steal as some ancient and cultivated people trained their children. You can educate a Church to persecute heretics, as many a Church has persecuted, by fire and sword. You can educate men to believe in the right of human slavery. And the thieves, persecutors and slave holders will do their work in all good conscience, just because conscience is good and is doing its rightful work when it stands guard over the law which a man's judgment has accepted.

If it be said that, after all, it comes to the same thing and conscience is nothing but a moral judgment, the answer is, No; it does not come to the same thing. To say it does is to juggle with words and conceal their meaning. To place conscience in a metaphysical jumble where it may not be differentiated from thought, feeling, judgment, perception, reflection, or intention,

is not only to treat a great subject in a loose and unscholarly manner, but it is also to shirk the responsibility of solving the practical and important problem of a contradictory conscience and to leave men in the midst of a trackless sea without the means of finding the sure haven of truth and right. In a loose and popular way conscience has been called the compass of a man's life, pointing always to the North Star of truth. The figure is not a happy one. The needle of the mariner's compass seldom points exactly to the true north. And if you cover the ship's sides with steel armor and put into her hold and on her decks great magnets of one kind or another, the navigator will have to verify the compass many times upon his voyage if he is to reach in safety the haven where he would be.

Conscience is only in a very limited sense the compass of a man's life. It does not, as we have before seen, always point a man towards what is absolutely right. Absolute right is eternal and entirely independent of our notions about it. If we do not and cannot know it because of an education and environment for which we were not responsible, it is a great misfortune, but not a sin. There is no sin in ignorance which is un-

avoidable, provided we follow with a willing mind the voice of conscience, which always tells us to do what seems, all things considered, to be right to us. The conduct may not be absolutely, but only relatively right, but if conscience dictates it, that is the course we must follow. And following it, we shall be using all the light within our reach. That is the best that any man can do. The man who has done his best is one whose will, choice and intention are all seeking the absolutely right, and who is, therefore, whatever be the state of his knowledge, "in all good conscience" in the sight of God and men.

LECTURE V.
MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE AUTHOR-
ITY OF CONSCIENCE.

LECTURE V.

Is conscience supreme? Is every man bound to hear and obey its voice? These are, confessedly, questions of the largest practical importance. In the simple and quiet life of a pastoral people, far from the madding crowd, they do not often press for immediate answers; but where the struggle for existence is fierce, competition strong and friction incessant, men are forced to front them at almost every step. In the varied spheres of our work and play there is a large number of actions that involve no moral obligation. Men differ one from another within these spheres and no one is blameworthy. One prefers the beauty and fragrance of the violet, another of the rose. One likes the taste of vegetables more than meat. One thinks his own land the best the sun shines on, its government the strongest, its men the bravest, its women the best and most beautiful, its institutions the most beneficent of all in the world. Another man will honor and defend another country. We would not have it otherwise. This is patriotism, and without it a people is

contemptible. But there is another and larger class of actions that are essentially moral. And in the social, political, ecclesiastical and business life the great questions that men are fighting over with intense earnestness are for the most part, at the heart and core of them, moral questions.

The men who are at once earnest and honest feel bound by their conscience to carry on their battle for the sake of truth. Are they so bound? Is conscience supreme? If it is, what and where is the authority of the State and the Church?

To the first of these questions the answer must be, Yes. Conscience is supreme. Its voice must be obeyed, because it is inferior to God alone, and has no superior on earth, and to "seek to dethrone it is to invade the citadel of heaven."* But it must be remembered that the throne of its empire is not universal. It rules imperially but only in its own realm. It never transcends its rightful power and limitations. It has no entanglements with foreign powers and neither gives nor takes advice or help.

If, as many seem to think, conscience is an unwritten Bible, an unerring guide to human under-

*Bishop Sanderson. 4th Lecture. De Obligatione Conscientiæ.

standing, an arbiter of truth, the judge of what is the true, dogmatic faith of the Church and the true meaning and intent of the law of the State, and if it be so perfectly wise and infallible that it never needs inquiry or evidence, and so influences men, as Mr. Lecky says it does, that "they have come instinctively and almost unconsciously to judge all doctrines by their intuitive sense of right, and to reject, or explain away, or throw into the background, those that will not bear the test, no matter how imposing may be the authority that authenticates them"—then the doctrine of its supremacy is full of danger. In such a case absolute truth and absolute right would seem to have no sure foundation, real knowledge would seem as nebulous as the Milky Way, and in the midst of a great multitude of varying opinions and actions one could not be certain of anything.

But put conscience in its true place and let it exercise its one true office and in its own realm it will be supreme, and yet have no conflict with honest inquiry, genuine evidence, or legitimate authority. But its place is not the sphere of the judgment and its office is not that of a critic, a judge or a guide. It is the office of the under-

standing to criticise, and judge and point out the way. But when we know the way or think we do; when we have apprehended the truth, whether by intuition or external evidence, the conscience approves our walking in the way of understanding and protests against any departure from it.

Any one can test the truth of this description for himself. So long as one is doing what he thinks right, and especially when that is the habit of this life, he will not be particularly conscious of this approval of conscience, will hardly know he has an inward monitor. The athlete exercising for his trial of strength could not take a single step without the life and action of the heart, and yet while the organs of his body are in perfect health and harmony, he never thinks of his heart, and he runs his race or plays his game unhindered and free. But let the heart give out, or the muscles stiffen, and he will at once be conscious of his weakness and danger. So when men follow the way marked out by the understanding, conscience is quiet. But let temptation arise and men begin to wander from that way, and conscience is quick and keen to arrest the attention and protest against the departure. The protest tells the man that he is in danger

of being false to himself, of becoming morally and intellectually dishonest, of selling his liberty for a price, of becoming a mere machine that is moved by an alien will which his judgment abhors.

This indicates the final reason why conscience must be supreme. It is to preserve the integrity of manhood, the soundness and symmetry of personal character. There is no way possible to do this except by the supremacy of conscience. If you dethrone it you at once turn a moral agent into a machine and so throw contempt upon the freedom and dignity of manhood, and what is a still more serious offence, you deny your obligation to the Supreme Creator of men, usurp the prerogatives of the one Great Lawgiver, and set up a petty human pretender on a rival throne.

There is no plainer inference to be drawn either from reason or Holy Scripture than that every man has the supreme control and determination of his own moral conduct under direct responsibility to his maker. Our obligation to our Maker grows out of our relation to him. As children we owe our Father love and obedience. But love and obedience must be voluntary if they have any worth or meaning. God does not wish the

service of slaves but of children. Hence it is that men are free as to the power of choosing good or evil. No man has the right to withhold love and obedience from his Maker, but every man has the power to do so. The possession of this power constitutes the glory of manhood and creates its responsibility. That responsibility is placed upon us not by our own desire, but by the will of the Supreme Creator. We can neither take it on nor put it off. It is laid on us by our Creator and is a part of our original nature. Therefore it is that all through the Bible runs the thought of human responsibility and that everywhere the appeal is made to human freedom. "See I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil; in that I have commanded thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments. I call Heaven and Earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God and that thou mayest obey His voice and that thou mayest cleave unto Him; for He is thy life."

That is the declaration of the Bible. But it is equally the voice of reason and it means that there is imbedded in the constitution of human nature the power and necessity of choosing and determining conduct. The necessity is on each man. Each acts for himself. No one can act for him. Nothing is done by proxy. Every man may indeed seek information, hear evidence, receive advice, listen to argument ; but when he has done all this, when his understanding has been informed and his judgment has clearly pointed out his rightful course, he must hear and obey the voice of conscience that bids him be true to his judgment, true to himself. If he plays the coward now and after the manner of the Roman Governor takes the question of his life, for whose decision he and no one else in all the world is responsible, to a noisy mob and asks them to decide it, he deserves much of the contempt with which Pilate's name is associated, for he has degraded his own manhood and trampled its crown of freedom and responsibility in the dust.

It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that God should hold a man accountable and unaccountable at the same time, or that He should have created in man a faculty whose voice always

utters a lie. This whole question touches the character of God as well as the nature of man. There are certain qualities which are absolutely essential to that character. Among them are goodness and truth. The highest possible Being must be both good and true. It is more than possible that God's goodness transcends our estimate of it, but it is altogether impossible that it should contradict that estimate. Our conception of God's goodness is formed from our vision of it in our fellows and especially as we see it in the Divine humanity of our Blessed Lord. We can have no intelligent idea of His goodness and truth, except as we see in Him the highest degree of those qualities which, when seen in men, excite our love and reverence. We must interpret God's nature by man's nature; and Christ teaches us to do this when He says, "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him."*

Doubtless goodness, wisdom, truth, as they are in God, are larger and purer than they are in us. Still it is and must be true that these and other qualities that are in both man and God are in

*St. Matt. vii., 9.

their essence alike. To suppose that these are one thing in God and a totally different thing in man is to destroy all possibility of communion, sympathy and adoration. If He is so different from man that, after all, He may contradict the very ideas of morality which we have learned from His revelation and from those whose character has been influenced by it, then I suppose He may be dreaded as Fate or as a fiend, but I am sure He can never be loved as a Father.

Dean Mansell affirmed in certain speculations concerning the Infinite that God's goodness may not have laws and attributes represented by anything that we know, because an infinite Personality can never be known intellectually. But the most of us would give up searching after God if we were convinced that we could find only a myth or a devil. And there are Christian men who, in such a case, would not hesitate to adopt for their own the strong and remarkable words of John Stuart Mill:

"To say that God's goodness may be different in kind from man's goodness, what is it but saying with slight change of phraseology that God may possibly not be good? To assert in words what we do not think in meaning, is as suitable

a definition as can be given of a moral falsehood. If instead of the glad tidings that there exists a Being in whom all the excellencies which the highest human mind can conceive exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a Being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of His government, except that the highest morality which we are capable of conceiving does not sanction them; convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this Being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say in plain terms that I will not. Whatever power such a Being may have over me, there is one thing that He shall not do: He shall not compel me to worship Him. I will call no Being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a Being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.”*

Strong and bold these words are. But I am not sure that they are too strong for the denial and

*Examination of Sir William Hamilton's *Philosophy*, Vol. I., Ch. 7.

denunciation of a theory that practically makes God unknowable and that contradicts the meaning of the Incarnation by making its message sad tidings of fear instead of glad tidings of great joy. Our knowledge of God's character may be limited in degree, but if it be not real knowledge so far as it goes, then indeed we are among the most wretched of agnostics, and neither reason nor revelation can dispel our ignorance.

But we are not agnostics. We know God both through reason and revelation. The revelation always appeals to our reason. It asks no man to believe without some reason for his faith. And no man ever did believe anything without some reason. He may not have been able always to give an explicit reason for his faith, but he always had an implicit one. The Bible appeals to us as reasonable beings who have the power and are under obligation to govern ourselves in accordance with God's laws. And it never once intimates that there can be any substitute for a man's own judgment and conscience. It could not allow any substitute without destroying man's freedom and accountability nor without travestying God's character as if He had given His revelation as a means of concealing thought.

The revelation which God has given us in His Holy Word was not intended to destroy our freedom and compel our reason. It was intended to give us a revelation of larger knowledge and clearer light and so to furnish us a more certain guide than we had before it was given. Saint Paul expressed this truth in his sermon on Mars Hill when he said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." The meaning is, that the Christian revelation has lightened our darkness, that we may see our way clearly. If we were compelled by an irresistible external power to walk in that way, light would be of no special advantage for we should be drawn as surely blind as seeing. The fact and statement that the Holy Scriptures are intended for our learning presuppose our possession of reason and moral and intellectual freedom, and although these Scriptures "command, argue, persuade and entreat," they leave the control of our conduct to ourselves.

What then, it will be asked, becomes of the

authority of the Bible and of the Church? Take the first question first.

The Holy Scriptures are undoubtedly a divine rule for men. We are under obligations to keep the law that is revealed in them. But it is perfectly evident that before we can keep a law we must know its meaning. God's laws are all quite independent of our notions about them. They existed before we were born and will continue long after our death. They hang over the cradle as well as the font; over our bank books as well as our prayer books; over our money safes as well as our altars. They are about our beds and around all our ways, and we can never go beyond their reach. And yet it is equally certain that before we can voluntarily obey a law we must know it as a law and have some conception of its meaning. That meaning must be ascertained by the use of reason. The knowledge of a revelation that was given at divers times, in sundry places and to different individuals is not innate. It is humanly speaking impossible for any one to know its meaning except by the use of reason, our own or that of some other human being. Seeking it at the lips of a priest, a preacher, a prayer book, a creed, formula, a set of ar-

ticles or a system of theology, does not preclude the necessity of employing reason to find out the interpretation of the law of the Lord.

Some nineteenth century seeker of the truth may not understand the prophecy of the atonement any better than did the ancient Ethiopian, and may therefore ask some well-instructed Philip to guide him in his reading. But the guide does not guess his way, and unless he use his own or another's reason to understand the meaning of the message that he is commissioned to give, it will be a case of the blind leading the blind, with both falling into the ditch. How far the Church may help the inquirer we shall see later on.

But in this connection I wish to admit and emphasize the fact that, while God's law is over us all and ought to be known by us all, it is still true that there are many persons, probably a much larger number than we commonly suppose, who by reason of causes entirely beyond their control are ignorant of, or misunderstand the law of God as given in the Bible. A pagan environment, defective early education and training, evil associations, the influence of heredity and other influences, leave some persons who

sincerity cannot be questioned in a position where it is impossible for them to see clearly and rightly understand the truth. They are, so to speak, morally and intellectually color-blind. They hold wrong opinions. Some of them worship both unknown and unreal gods. Some deny the truth that we hold most dear, and yet have a good conscience and obey it strictly. What will you do with them? Will you say, as so many do, in your haste and heat, it is impossible, they cannot have a good conscience? The answer is, evidence is against you. Out of the Bible itself the proof comes to confront you. Saul the persecutor had as good a conscience as Paul the Apostle had. At the heart of him he was probably as good a man morally when he was haling men to prison as he was when, later, he preached on Mars Hill. He was not converted from badness to goodness. He was not changed from a sinner into a saint. He was brought out of darkness into light. His judgment was informed and changed. His conscience remained unchanged. Your charge therefore will not hold, for there are undoubtedly cases in modern life much like his in principle, though without the same circumstances.

Will you go on repeating the pious sarcasm about the "uncovenanted mercies of God"? St. Peter will unhesitatingly reply, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." And St. Paul will add his voice and tell you that "When the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves, in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts one with another, accusing or else excusing them," and then he will add in a sentence of tremendous meaning, "One only is the Lawgiver and Judge, even He who is able to save and destroy, but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?"

The meaning is that no man has the right to judge the conscience of another. That is the sole right and prerogative of the Almighty and Omniscient God.

What then is the duty of such persons as I have mentioned? Clearly it is first the duty of keeping a good conscience, and, secondly, of informing their judgment. They must use all the

light they have, become freed as far as possible from prejudice, willing to know the whole truth, no matter what the consequences may be, and then pray God "to forgive us all our sins, negligences and ignorances."

When men have done all this in honesty and sincerity, when they have used all the light they have and all within their reach, they have done all that is possible for men to do, and they need not fear that God will ask impossibilities of them.

If, like St. Paul, they know nothing against themselves, they are not thereby perfectly justified, for it is possible that they might have known and done more than they did know and do. But they may be certain that He that judgeth them is a merciful, wise and just Lord, who will give honest intentions, sincere desires and righteousness of life their due reward.

LECTURE VI.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH IN ITS
RELATION TO CONSCIENCE AND INDI-
VIDUAL JUDGMENT.

1

LECTURE VI.

THE final question for our consideration in these lectures touches the relation of the Church to the judgment and conscience of men in respect of their religious opinions and belief.

Has the Church any authority whatever over conscience? Has the Church any authority to suspend, suppress, compel or even subordinate to her expressed will the individual or private judgment of men? These are confessedly important questions, and if they are old ones they seem somehow ever new and ever needing answers. The answers will depend very much upon what is meant by authority.

Our own Church in the twentieth of her Thirty-nine Articles declares, "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith," and it seems a fair inference from that declaration that she claims authority to declare what has always been the faith, to make laws for public worship, the administration of the Sacraments, to perpetuate its offices and to administer discipline. The

article seems also to intimate that doctrines contained in Holy Scripture and necessary to be believed are not to be left to the individual judgment to accept or reject as it chooses. But for some reason she left the declaration incomplete and did not name the judge who should decide what doctrines are in, or may be proved by the Scriptures, nor did she so much as suggest how any judgment should be executed.

To many men in and out of the Church this has been regarded as her chief defect and greatest weakness. Every thoughtful and earnest mind desires to know the certainty of those things wherein it has been instructed, and they who are often perplexed and easily wearied by the difficult questions that are suggested by the study of natural and revealed religion, long for nothing so much as an infallible teacher and an authoritative voice that shall settle and close these questions forever. The desire is natural and laudable and is doubtless intended to lead toward the attainment of larger knowledge, and by means of it the "thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." But he is a poor philosopher who regards his own wants and wishes as evidence that they will certainly be fulfilled in

his life, or even that the things wished for really exist. That is one of the illusions common to youth and it is not infrequently a delusion as well.

A religion or a system of theology, freed from all mystery, separated from all historical investigations, requiring no individual study, commended and commanded by an infallible and overpowering authority, has doubtless a fascination for many minds, and to the indolent, unintellectual and unaspiring seems in every way to be desired. But if anyone fancies that Christianity is such a religion, he has only to read its history to realize his mistake. From the coming of the Son of Man to His ascension into heaven and from that time till now, the Christian religion has appealed to the reason, heart and conscience of individual men.

Whatever authority is possessed by the Church which holds Christ's teaching and truth for human salvation, that authority must be interpreted in harmony with the truth that the Christian religion appeals to the reason of men, that it expects them to be ready to give an answer to those who ask reasons for Christian hope and faith, and that it everywhere recognizes the su-

premacy of conscience. "No such doctrine as the substitution of authority for conscience was ever taught by our Lord. The system that denies the supremacy of conscience is the growth of a later age."*

Before we examine the system that makes that denial, it will be well for us to look at some kinds of authority which the common judgment of men recognizes as legitimate. One does not have to look far to find that principle of authority commonly admitted in the affairs of practical life. It may not be regarded always as absolute or infallible, but it is no less recognized for all practical purposes, as real authority.

Take the relation of parent and child. Without the recognition of a real authority of a father over his child every household would be sooner or later divided against itself, and the larger life of society and the State would be disordered and endangered. The State recognizes the rightfulness and necessity of parental authority and when parents die leaving minor children, it throws its own authority about them both to guard their right and command their obedience. No one who

*The Rev. Samuel Seabury, D. D. *Sermons on Conscience.* P. 21.

loves his country and his kind would have it otherwise.

In the educational systems of our own and every other land the principle of authority is freely recognized and acted upon. The boy goes to school not always because he wishes to go, but rather because he is sent by one having authority over him. The teacher in Grammar School and University instructs his students not according to rules and methods which his fancy chooses, but in accordance with principles and laws which have the authority of demonstrated utility and superiority. When you pass from secular to religious training the same recognition of the principle is even more clearly seen. Even those religionists, the logical tendency of whose theological and ecclesiastical system would lead them to leave their children without any religious training until they should be old enough to choose for themselves what kind they would have, are better than their creed, and with an inconsistency that is as amazing as it is absurd, substitute the Sunday-school for the Church. Experience, to say nothing of common sense, teaches us all that we cannot afford to let our children serve an apprenticeship of fifteen or twenty years to the

world, the flesh and the devil, and then expect them to be converted by miracle or magic, from vice to virtue and from darkness to light. We cannot afford to wait for a condition that may never be created, and that is not likely to be created by a waiting policy. However careful we may be not to interfere with the freedom and obligation of another's personality and conscience we are nevertheless, consciously or unconsciously, influencing the religious development of our children. We cannot avoid this. It is part of the personal influence that each possesses and exerts whether he will or not, and by reason of which no man liveth or dieth to himself, and every man is set, as the Master was, for the rising or falling of many.

Then there is that large class of persons of whom Dr. Newman tells us in his essay on Private Judgment, who by reason of their defective education and environment are unable to "inquire, reason, and decide about religion."

Many of these, it must be confessed, are influenced toward their particular life by what is, in some sense, the authority of the example of employer, associate, preacher or personal friend, without much careful thought and, it may

be, without much searching of the heart. The authority is not consciously recognized as such in these cases, and it is not arbitrarily enforced, but it is none the less a real authority and has its due effect.

Besides all this, there is the larger authority of the State which must be taken into account. This is perfectly real and absolutely necessary to the "safety, honor and welfare of the people," and that "all things may be so ordered and settled upon the best and surest foundations, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established among us for all generations."* The authority of the State is exercised for the general good, that no man may be deprived of his rights, that every man may be compelled to perform his public duties, and that all may be secure in the possession of life and property.

There is also a certain authority exercised by the general consent of mankind. It is not absolute and is never enforced as that of the parent and the State is sometimes enforced. But with the majority of men it is real authority, or at least they submit to it as if it were real and in-

*Book of Common Prayer, Prayer for Congress.

vincible, contenting themselves "with holding that true which mankind generally believe and so long as they believe it; or that which has been believed by those who pass for the most eminent among the minds of the past."†

This process of settling individual tendencies and opinions by bringing to bear upon them the weight of a general conviction may be seen in different schools of thought in the Church; in trades unions and brotherhoods of working men; in the various associations of professional and business men, and more conspicuously in the political parties of our own and other lands. In these different groups there are not a few who do not thoroughly understand the meaning of their own union, but the members hold together both by their personal affinities for each other and by their common sympathy with the principles and purposes of their organizations. Many an individual whose judgment has seen clearly and declared emphatically the unwisdom of a proposed general cessation of work on the part of the order to which he belongs, has nevertheless submitted to the authority of the large majority of his brotherhood

†J. S. Mill. Essay on Theism.

when it has declared that a strike was on. Obviously in cases of this kind the authority has been that of an influence rather than that of a law and power, human or divine, but oftentimes the influence has been so great and has been backed by such threats of fearful penalty to those who may resist it, as to be practically an authority to all on whom it has been exercised. Besides these particular cases, it is perfectly true that we are all influenced consciously or unconsciously by the condition, feeling, opinions and conduct of our fellows. We receive this influence before we examine it, sometimes before we realize it; and it always comes to us in the first place as a kind of authority from which, at that time, we do not think of rebelling.

Then there is a general belief in the acceptance of scientific authority. In one sense of the word there is no authority in or over science and yet, in another sense, a true science is full of authority because it is the result of investigations which have been repeated, tested and proved so frequently and thoroughly, and by such competent scholars that everyone accepts the results of their work and no one thinks of questioning it. It is not a blind submission on our part, be-

cause we have ourselves tested their reasoning and the result up to a certain point, and finding that result correct, so far as we have examined it, we trust that the whole process of reasoning is as sound as that part which we have examined. A good many of us, when we were boys, studying arithmetic and algebra, made mistakes in our calculations and were surprised and annoyed to find the answers to the problems given in the books different from those we had worked out. But we seldom took it into our little stupid heads that the author was wrong and we were right. We accepted his answer as authoritative, worked over our problems once more and found the answer in the book correct.

We are in practically the same condition now that we are grown. We trust the mathematician, the geologist, the biologist, the botanist, the physician, because we believe they have the authority of facts behind them which we have neither the time nor the ability to investigate. Their authority guides us toward and assures us of the safe conclusion which we wish to reach.

Then there is the authority of truth itself, verified by intuition. Unlike all other kinds of authority, in that it has no external organ to speak

or enforce its will, it is still, in some respects, the most powerful of all authority under God and carries with it its own witness and verifications. It is of this that Coleridge speaks when he says of the Bible, "It finds me in my deepest nature." Because there is a recognized correspondence between the truth and the most real needs of man, and because truth is adapted to his wants and satisfies them, it is accepted without argument. No man needs to hear an essay on the chemical properties of a sunbeam to make him feel its warmth when the sun is shining. And so truth and religion are their own best arguments and witnesses to the mind that is fitted to receive them. Truth commands and subjugates by its presence, and, like Emerson's beauty, "is its own excuse for being." The most perfect exhibition of this authority was seen in our Lord when He met those who afterward said, "He spake as one having authority and not as the Scribes." The Scribes spoke by rule, from the book, according to the formula whose principle they seem not to have perceived. Christ was utterly unlike them; He seldom appealed to any external authority; He never laid down minute and complex rules but somehow His

thought was like the atmosphere of heaven, His words touched the springs of human nature, and His truth carried in itself its heavenly and eternal authority.

Recognizing, as we must, the principle of authority and the exhibitions of it which we have had under review, the questions now to be answered are, whether these manifestations of authority are in any way inconsistent with the free exercise of reason, and whether the Church in matters of faith and order has any authority to compel the individual judgment of her members so that they must either kill their conscience or remain outside of the Church.

No man who is not blind to the lesson of the ages will fail to see that there are some results of the common thought of mankind that stand sure. They are among the things that cannot be shaken. And because they are, they have what we call authority. Yet not one of these that I have mentioned is contrary to reason. They have all been secured by the use of the reasoning power, and that not of some vaguely imagined collective or corporate faculty of the race, but by the exercise of individual reason. There is no such thing as corporate reason either in the world or in the



Church. Men are personal. They have individuality. They have been placed in social relations and each man is bound up with the race. He may never lose sight of the solidarity of the race and yet every exercise of his judgment for its welfare is his own act. He may never outgrow the larger wisdom of the community and the world he lives in, and yet he is obliged to think his own thoughts, use his own judgment and follow his own conscience. And it is in just this way that men have come to accept such authority as I have outlined, not because it is arbitrary, overwhelming, all-compelling, as authority, but because it is seen to rest on a reasonable foundation. It is the aggregated judgment of men, and as such it is of great importance and offers a reason and claims the right to be heard and heeded. But the ground of the reason and right is its ecumenicity. It is certain that in general the wisdom of many is larger than that of any one man. Therefore it is that the individual steadies his own judgment by that of his fellows.

Every thoughtful observer sees that we have fallen upon times when the path of thought is away from individualism and towards the social point of view. Theories of society are supplant-

ing theories of the individual. The solidarity of humanity is the prominent thought in the scientific and historical study of man. It is even running to the extreme of determinism which annihilates the individual. There is danger in this tendency if carried to the point when the common cry is "*vox populi vox Dei*." The voice of the people is not always and necessarily the voice of God. Athanasius *contra mundum*, and fighting it for the faith; Galileo insisting that the world does move; Columbus determined to find a new route and a new world for men, and every patient scholar who has discovered a truth unknown to and opposed by his fellows, all have proved indisputably that the world is not always right in its opinions, and have shown, among other things, that private judgment is sometimes superior to the best and highest human authority.

What is true of individual judgment in regard to so many of the opinions of men concerning matters outside of the Church, is equally true of the authority of the Church itself. That the Church has authority is perfectly true, but that it has any authority to coerce and compel the individual judgment must be forever emphatically denied. "And the reason is that God's government of

His Church is not coercive and compulsory like the governments of this world, but of a moral and spiritual nature. Its sanctions are promises and threats which are to be fulfilled in a future life, and which leave us free to choose and determine, albeit at our peril, our behavior and conduct in this life.”*

The Church is not a substitute for conscience, but a help for the forming and guidance of our judgment, and it cannot without stultification appeal to my private judgment to accept its authority and teaching, and with the same voice declare that I have no right to a private judgment. First of all, there is no other than a private or individual judgment. Whatever law or canon has been passed in general or provincial councils was made by the action of individuals giving each his own judgment, and the decree of the council is the aggregated and formulated opinion of its members.

There is no other way possible for a society or a church to make and set forth its decisions. The early Christian Church did not receive the faith all at once, as something let down out of heaven from God. The Church is older than its

*Seabury, Sermons, p. 12.

books, no doubt, and they were written by different men, at different times and places, to the Church and for the Church, and to be handed down and witnessed and interpreted by the Church; but not for the purpose of compelling the judgment and smothering the conscience of its members. On the contrary, the books themselves declare that men shall prove all things, hold fast the good, reject the evil, learn of the doctrine, and give answers for their faith and hope. The difference between the Apostles, especially between St. Peter and St. Paul, about things which were not essential, indeed, but which were certainly regarded by them and others as important, is plain and positive proof that individual judgment was not to be arbitrarily suppressed and conscience dethroned.

And yet this is precisely what is aimed at by that branch of the Church which sets up its own authority as supreme over the judgment and conscience of its members. That it does this is confessed by its own writers and is known by all who have examined the subject. The supremacy of the See of Rome in that Church's view of the essence of revealed religion, and an unreserved submission to that See is, if not the sum total of

religion, one of the greatest Christian virtues. The rights, liberty and conscience of the Christian are, of necessity, merged in this one virtue of submission. He has no rights, except such as the See consents to recognize. He has no liberty to think or act except as that See allows or directs. He has no right and no rule of conscience except such as Rome prescribes. He must be absolutely passive in himself, to be moved only by the hand of the Roman See, and as far as it is possible for him, he must make himself, to use Loyola's expression, "a corpse, to be raised only by the power of Rome."

That I may not seem extravagant, I quote the words of Doctor Newman after he had given his adherence to the Roman Communion, in his book on Development: "Moreover it is to be borne in mind that as the essence of all religion is authority and obedience, so the distinction between natural and revealed religion lies in this, that the one has a subjective authority and the other objective. Revelation consists in the manifestation of the invisible Divine Power, or in the substitution of the voice of a Lawgiver for the voice of conscience. The supremacy of conscience is the essence of natural religion; the su-

premacY of Apostle or Pope or Church or Bishop is the essence of the revealed; and when such external authority is taken away the mind falls back again upon that inward guide which it possessed even before Revelation was vouchsafed. Thus what conscience is in the system of nature, such is the voice of Scripture or of the Holy See, as we may determine it, in the system of revelation. It may be objected indeed that conscience is not infallible; it is true, but still it is ever to be obeyed. And that is just the prerogative which controversialists assign to the See of Rome; it is not in all cases infallible (written before the last Vatican Council), but it has even in all cases a claim upon our obedience. And as obedience to conscience, even supposing ourselves ill informed, tends to the improvement of our moral nature and ultimately of our knowledge, so obedience to our ecclesiastical superior may subserve our growth in illumination and sanctity even though he should command what is extreme or inexpedient, or what is external to his legitimate province."

All this means beyond question that in the view of the writer and of the Church in which he became a Cardinal every Christian man is under

obligations to surrender both his judgment and his conscience to the authority of the Roman See.

Ignatius Loyola, in his letter on Obedience, says, "There is an end of the glorious simplicity of blind obedience when we question with ourselves whether the commands of our Superior be right or not, an end of humility also, since though on the one hand we obey, yet on the other we put ourselves above our Superior." Each of these two acute minds saw plainly enough that the supremacy of an external authority and the supremacy of conscience could not coexist. The conscience must either be supreme or die.

Logically, therefore, we must all take our choice between a blind submission to absolute authority that pretends to be infallible and the conscientious employment of such means of arriving at truth as God has blessed us with.

In conclusion, if blind obedience or servile submission in religion is the duty God most desires of us, then the noblest faculties with which He has been pleased to endow us, curiosity, the longing to know more of Himself, are quite superfluous and positively injurious. Then every new discovery that affects religion is an error until its credentials have been passed upon by the

proper authority, when it suddenly becomes a truth. In that case, the most dangerous men in the world are the prophets of all times, with their contempt for established opinion and custom, and their great original thoughts of God. Rome, at all events, for five hundred years has been obliged to burn and excommunicate all of her prophets whom she could not stifle. The new truths which her sons have given to the world have been atoned for by their blood and by their life's happiness. Not even the pious Lenormant could escape.

It is easy for Roman Catholic writers to draw a dark picture of the license of unbridled individual judgment, and to point triumphantly to a divided Christendom torn to pieces by contending sects. That, they say, is the result of liberty of conscience and of taking the most mysterious book in the world, which no two persons interpret in the same way, as the source of authority. A certain part of this accusation is true. Man is essentially an imperfect being. He passes from one extreme to another. Never is life symmetrical and equally developed on all sides. But God protects us from too much error by making error short-lived. There comes a point in the action of the human mind beyond which vagary cannot

go. That point has long been reached in Protestant Christianity. The Bible can no longer be made to mean anything one wishes it to mean. Sects, far from multiplying, for the past hundred years have shown a tendency to diminish. At present there is an unmistakable desire on the part of the great orthodox bodies of Protestantism to draw together. It was only natural after long ages of stern repression that the human conscience, suddenly set free, at first should have abused its liberty. At the same time the fact remains that during these centuries of ferment humanity has advanced with gigantic strides. The only period of similar growth within the history of Christianity is the first three centuries, when the Fathers were philosophers and the Church was free as air. What organization has lost, humanity has gained a hundred times.

Those persons who imagine that civilization is about to allow itself to abandon the fields in which it has reaped its golden harvest, and to be led back to the school whose tyranny it has escaped, are the victims of a strange illusion. Humanity will continue to develop, and the Church will develop with it. But our supreme dogma, at least in all things pertaining to the mind, is

liberty. In point of fact the Church of Rome, as a world power ruled by one centre, was built strictly on the model of the old Roman Empire. Its superb organization owes its inception to the genius of Julius Cæsar and the great Roman lawyers who planned the Empire. Now the political theory on which that vast aggregation of power was reared was that the citizen exists for the State, the individual must be sacrificed to the organization—a conception which the Anglo-Saxon race has absolutely rejected, the very contradiction of the view of life entertained by Jesus Christ. That harsh theory the Roman Catholic Church has carried out to the letter. By ruthlessly sacrificing individual genius and goodness, by silencing every protesting voice, by forbidding men to think and by keeping the larger part of humanity almost in the condition of imbecility, she has managed to preserve her superb organization unbroken for a thousand years. But the better part of the world will no longer tolerate those annihilating conditions. Humanity refuses to lie any longer in that Procrustean bed. Better a rotten Christianity than a Christianity which

: principle of external authority with-

out value in religion, and is everything to be left to the vagaries of individual judgment? I do not think so; practically that is impossible. Push individualism as far as you please, individual judgments unite and a new source of authority is formed, and underlying all our individual opinions is the authority of Jesus Christ on which the faith of the Church rests more absolutely than ever before. To tell the truth, every great religion has contained within itself these two undying elements—authority and organization on the one side, and liberty and personal inspiration on the other. Beside Israel's bold, iconoclastic Seers, who were scarcely more than deists, stood the Law of Moses, without which they would have disrupted the Hebrew Church in a few years. Their personal convictions, which were largely negative, could never become the religion of the people. Beside the daring idealism of the Upanishads stand the Laws of Manu, which organized life in its least details. In our own Church there is the party called "High" on the one side, and the party called "Broad," its only true antagonist, on the other. Out of the conflict of these two opposing principles comes progress. The thesis reconciled with the thesis antithesis produces the

